DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 277 679 SP 028 442

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TITLE The Brackenridge Internship in Teaching Program: Acknowledging Research as a Component of Teacher Education Reform.
PUB DATE Jan 87
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Development; Demonstration Programs; Higher Education; High Schools; *High School Students; *Internship Programs; Leadership Training; *Preservice Teacher Education; Teacher Education Programs; *Teacher Recruitment
IDENTIFIERS Brackenridge Internship in Teaching Program; *Trinity University TX

ABSTRACT

The Brackenridge Internship in Teaching program, a new, 6-year model program for recruiting, training, and retaining high-ability high school students as elementary and secondary school teachers, has recently entered its third year of operation in San Antonio, Texas. Based upon extensive data collected in an ongoing fashion since the program's inception by a team of independent researchers, this paper reports broad results of the program's three overlapping stages: (1) acclimation--recognition of the scholars as a group from which much is expected and providing mentorship and leadership for them; (2) early specialization and introduction into teaching; and (3) development of a sense of professionalism. In addition, this paper discusses the program's unique and important formative evaluation component. (Author/JD)

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THE BRACKENRIDGE INTERNSHIP IN TEACHING PROGRAM: ACKNOWLEDGING RESEARCH AS A COMPONENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION REFORM

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January, 1987

SP 028 443

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ABSTRACT

A new, six-year model program for recruiting, training, and retaining high-ability high school students as elementary and secondary school teachers enters its third year of operation in San Antonio, Texas. Based upon extensive data collected in an ongoing fashion since the program's inception by a team of independent researchers, this paper reports broad results of the program's three overlapping stages -- acclimation, specialization, and professionalization -- following its first two years of operation. In addition, the paper discusses the program's unique and important formative evaluation component.

THE BRACKENRIDGE INTERNSHIP IN TEACHING PROGRAM:

ACKNOWLEDGING RESEARCH AS A COMPONENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION REFORM

National concern for the effectiveness and quality of teaching has renewed interest in teacher training. A still-growing list of reports attests to the need to upgrade the quality of people entering the teaching profession and the concomitant need for restructuring teacher training programs.[1]

Upgrading the pool of prospective teachers and enhancing teacher training programs are difficult tasks; tasks with a checkered history of success and failure. The burden of recruiting, training and retaining high quality teacher candidates has been great. Still, the price for their continued absence is unimaginable.[2] No less problemmatic has been the structural improvement of teacher education programs. Since the establishment of the conventional, four-year model some years ago, numerous alternatives have been proposed, several have been implemented, and a few have been successful.[3] As a rule, social, political, and economic forces often combine to thwart needed change.[4] Nevertheless, the clarion call for reform in the training of teachers has been sounded once again.

Extended Program for Talented Teacher Candidates

Trinity University, a proud and prestigious liberal arts school in southwest Texas, has launched an innovative, six-year experimental program in response to this recent call. The Brackenridge Internship in Teaching (BIT) program is designed to meet the combined challenges of improving teacher training programs and attracting, preparing, and retaining academically talented men and women for the teaching profession. With help from a local philanthropic foundation, seventeen high-achieving San Antonio high school students were identified and recruited in 1984. This paper focuses on the BIT curriculum in which these students participate. Specifically, we discuss

the program's three overlapping stages -- acclimation, specialization, and professionalization -- and examine the value of this particular reform effort.[5]

Stage 1: Acclimation

The seventeen Brackenridge interns were recruited from the top five percent of graduating high school seniors throughout their city. They were introduced to the public in a ceremony honoring outstanding teachers. These interns knew that they were accepting a one-in-a-lifetime opportunity to become a "new breed" of teachers: change agents who, as one intern stated, "will be better able to truly teach the children."

As members of a highly visible and elite group, the interns gradually developed a sense of identity and a network of support. Many roomed together in the Trinity dorms and, within a very short time, most acknowledged the group's shared desire to become good teachers. "We have a goal," one intern remarked, "and we want to reach that goal." This creation and maintenance of *espirit de corps* is a key curricular component during the acclimation stage.

A second curricular component is mentorship. A graduate student was selected to help assist the interns' transition into college life and to keep the group on top of its many and varied responsibilities. "I can always count on her to remember things for me" was one intern's comment. Others noted their mentor's value in guiding them through planning, organizing, and "finding things." This mentor also works closely with the program's director and serves as a sort of kindred intermediary for the interns. She is characterized most frequently by them as a "big sister" with whom they can talk about "personal things." This combination of institutional liaison and trusted friend makes the BIT mentor a highly valued component of the program.

The most important component of the acclimation stage is leadership. Someone must take a personal interest in and responsibility for the success and well-being of the intern group. This person must be active in recruiting and screening each potential intern and must have the vision, charisma, and skills to successfully implement the program.[6]

The BIT program was the brainchild of one faculty member who secured funding, recruited interns, and established the curriculum. By the time these seventeen young people ventured onto Trinity's campus, they were steadfastly linked with this faculty member. Few college freshmen have been so privileged. Interns characterize this man as "our father in school." They have learned to share his intense dedication and zeal for the program and the profession. He showers them with expectations, demands and promises. "No matter what we do, he's always pushing for us," one intern recalls. More importantly, perhaps, "he's always there."

The program's acclimation stage is the most critical. Group identity, mentorship and leadership are the curricular components needed to insure that these talented teacher candidates pursue their chosen career with passion, enthusiasm and commitment.

The structure and components of this stage are not without their weaknesses, however. For example, recruiting the "best and the brightest," stressing their importance and uniqueness, and fostering group identity develops a sense of elitism. Can such individuals effectively deal with the mundane requirements and routines of everyday life in the schools? Secondly, providing personal services and access to university decision makers reduces the routine trials and tribulations of freshman college life. Can such services and opportunities postpone or even eliminate valuable maturational experiences for these young people? These and other related questions have been addressed elsewhere.[7] Those who chose to implement such a program must foresee and minimize these potentially undesirable outcomes.

Stage 2: Specialization

Brackenridge Interns shoulder academic responsibilities beyond the already challenging liberal arts curriculum taken by all Trinity University students. As the focus on acclimation fades, an equally powerful spotlight is shone on career specialization.

Unlike most prospective teacher education students, these interns study schooling from "day one." Both semesters of their freshman year include a weekly, three-hour seminar. These seminars provide a thorough introduction to schooling at the national, state, and local levels as interns find

opportunities to share ideas and insights with prominent educators and community leaders. Interns meet with members of school faculties to discuss problems within their building, the city's mayor and city council to learn of system-wide school improvement plans, a member of the state board of education who explains state reform efforts, and leading national educators including Earnest Boyer. Such encounters enable these budding young teachers to, in their words, understand "behind the scenes stuff" and to "learn the ropes." They have a distinct head-start toward the process of career enculturation.[8]

A third special seminar occurs during the first semester of the sophomore year. Here, interns work in a single classroom with a master teacher at least three hours a week. Employing skills and applying concepts learned in the preceding seminars, the interns begin as observers and work their way through to classroom aides and eventually to tutors. In most cases, they are eventually allowed to prepare and present entire lessons to a class.

Members of the group found this practicum arrangement far superior to earlier ones in which they passively sat and observed other teaching. After hearing and reading so many negative accusations about teaching, they enjoyed and benefitted from becoming a part of the classroom interaction. "I'm fired up about teaching," wrote one intern following this experience, "because I learned in my practicum that [teaching is] not that bad."

To date, these three Brackenridge Seminars define the special core of the BIT program. As sophomores, interns spend their second semester in "regular" education classes with other prospective teachers, most of whom are juniors. They report that some of the content is already "old" for them. Unlike the other students, they seek out placement sites for course laboratory components with the self-assuredness of veterans.

For all prospective teachers, years three and four at Trinity are spent accumulating credit hours in content specializations. No one is an "education major." Many of the Brackenridge Interns major in mathematics and the sciences. Although they are unsure of the particulars, the interns are certain that their group will continue to meet and remain close during the next two years.

The BIT model surpasses conventional teacher preparation programs during this specialization stage by immediately immersing the interns in the culture of schooling. The program provides these talented students with access to and input from a variety of persons who care about the teaching/learning process. They establish a working knowledge of their future craft. Until this unusual component has proven its value, getting educators and other experts to contribute to the seminars and practicums will take some convincing. It has, however, succeeded in promoting an early and strong intern commitment to the teaching profession.

Stage 3: Professionalization

The Brackenridge Internship in Teaching project includes a two-year induction phase during which the interns will receive continued support and assistance from the faculty at Trinity University. Though plans are not yet complete, this stage will include site visits by university faculty in addition to group meetings on Trinity's campus. The model will attempt to create a two-way corridor between the interns' old and new environments.

Interns should have few problems locating a school to welcome them. The program's notoriety has created a demand for their services that is unlikely to fade. Several proudly tell of the offers they have already received from principals, and all would agree that they will enter their careers, as one so proudly put it, as "pacesetters for a new generation of teachers." The interns look forward to induction years full of rewarding collaboration between themselves and their teaching colleagues, school administrators, and university teachers.[9]

Evaluation Marks an Important Difference

Efforts to improve teacher education very much like the Brackenridge Internship in Teaching program have been made before.[10] Setting this program apart, however, is its independent formative evaluation component.[11] Historically, formative evaluation research has played an integral role -- both in its presence and absence -- in curriculum innovation.[12] Scriven identifies this sort of evaluation as one type of "process evaluation" important during curriculum implementation.[13]

Formative evaluation is the key element in legitimizing, improving and disseminating any reform model. With the support of those responsible for designing and implementing the BIT model, an independent team of researchers seeks to determine not only the extent to which its goals are being met, but also the ways in which these seventeen young people are changing both personally and professionally.[14]

The team's findings and impressions are regularly shared with everyone participating in the BIT project and the educational community at large. Emergent themes and patterns are routinely provided for the BIT participants during interviews, conversations and correspondence. Additionally, findings from the study are purposefully presented in informal, discussion formats at national conferences in order to promote critical discourse that will enlighten teacher educators and improve teacher education.

Promises and Problems of the BIT Model

While rhetoric about the reform of teacher education and the need for quality teachers is waning, a small contingent of talented young adults is pursuing these goals. Meeting and speaking with educators, politicians, and concerned business leaders from around the country as well as working with master teachers in the classroom, the Brackenridge Interns represent public testimonials to their experience in a unique teacher education program and their commitment to quality in teaching. In short, the BIT model recruits and trains talented youth as emmissaries for public opinion and public education.

The interns have an eclectic grasp of the foundations of schooling and demonstrate an unrequited eagerness to engage in classroom teaching. During the first two years they have successfully met a series of increasingly difficult challenges. These experiences have distinguished them from most teacher education students.

A third promising feature is the program's development and maintenance of a strong group identity among the interns. This practice of promoting mutual support holds much promise, as Lortie

noted, for true professional collegiality and "closer working relationships in schools."[15] As these interns enter local schools, this sense of identity and cohesiveness may be critical to their success.

However, the model is not without its problems. As noted earlier, the group identity shared by the interns may develop into an elitism. Their sense of "mission" also could alienate their student peers and teaching colleagues. Entering the teaching ranks as "saviors," the interns may find that there is no one willing to be "saved."

A second problem is already emerging. The depth and breadth of specialized training these students have had in their first two years of study begs the question, "What next?" Can such rich and unusual experiences continue to be provided? While the BIT model does much to promote a sense of "groupness" among the interns, it must also maintain that sense. Though little doubt of future "Brackenridge gatherings" exists, few planned events are scheduled and chance meetings are increasingly less likely as students specialize and as the pressures upon them build. Will a drop in the level, number, or perceived quality of noteworthy BIT experiences result in reduced career enthusiasm for the interns?

Conclusion

The Brackenridge Internship in Teaching program is now in its third year. The model has been successful in recruiting and acclimating a coterie of talented young people into teaching. Since the arrival of the Brackenridge Interns, Trinity's Department of Education has employed ideas and adapted successful practices of the BIT program. New groups of prospective teachers have been recruited and have begun their study at Trinity.

How the interns will be placed, the conditions under which they will work, and the impact they will have on teaching colleagues are all unknown at this point. Likewise, the number who will remain teachers after their obligatory two years in the classroom remains to be seen.

The first two years of the experiment indicate that the Brackenridge Internship in Teaching program holds much promise as a model for teacher education reform. Other institutions have expressed interest in adapting this model for their teacher training programs. Insights gained from

ongoing evaluation of all the program's components and its outcomes will not only help to improve this program but can provide useful data to other institutions considering its adoption.[16]

ENDNOTES

1. One of the latest national reform reports, "A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century," was recently released by the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. For a review of many of the reports see Northeast Regional Exchange, "The National Reports on Education: A Comparative Analysis," in Beatrice and Ronald Gross, eds., *The Great School Debate* (New York: Touchstone, 1985), 50-71.

2. Victor S. Vance and Phillip C. Schlechty, "The Distribution of Academic Ability in the Teaching Force: Policy Implications." *Phi Delta Kappan* 64 (1982), 22-27.

3. One such model, the "extended program," is an attempt to meet a recognized need "for a more extensive training program to accomodate adequate professional and liberal educational study." Over the years these extended programs have typically taken the form of condensing most of a student's professional training into a fifth year following the bachelor's degree. See W. Robert Houston and Katherine K. Newman, "Teacher Education Programs," In Harold E. Mitzel, ed., *Encyclopedia of Educational Research, vol. 4*, 5th ed. (New York: Free Press,1982),1891-1893.

Successful extended programs appear to be those which manage to use this fifth year as "an actively supported induction year" with the new teachers gainfully employed, albeit on a probationary basis. See Rosanne J. Blass and Jeffrey Dunbar, " Teacher Education Reform at Allegheny College," *Educational Horizons* 64 (1986), 87-89. See also Dale P. Scannell, "The Extended Teacher Education Program at the University of Kansas," *Phi Delta Kappan* 66 (1984), 130-133.

4. Geraldine D. Brownlee, "The Identification of Teacher Education Candidates," In Peter J. Burke and Robert G. Heideman, eds., *Career-long Teacher Education* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1985), 40-61. See also James T. Sears, "A Critical Ethnography of Teacher Education Programs at Indiana University: An Inquiry into the Perceptions of Students and Faculty Regarding Quality and Effectiveness." Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1984; and David Clark & Egon Guba, *Contextual Factors Affecting Individual and Institutional Behavior in Schools, Colleges, and Departments of Education* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, Research on Institutions of Teacher Education, 1976).

5. Marshall, Sears, and Otis-Wilborn, in addition to Phillip C. Moyer, are members of an independent research team studying the BIT program. For a complete report on the program's first year, see James T. Sears, Phillip Moyer, & John D. Marshall, *A Longitudinal Study of a Demonstration Project Related to the Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Highly Qualified Persons for the Teaching Profession : The Brackenridge Interns -- The First Year.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 272 454).

6. Similar use of impressionistic data when screening teacher education candidates has been suggested by H. V. Bernard and K. R. Thornburg, "Selective Admissions in Teacher Education: A Critical Reappraisal," *TEASE III* 2 (1980),36, and Grace Muente, "Let's Be More Selective With Student Teachers," *Journal of Teacher Education* 25 (1974), 236.

7. Sears, Moyer, and Marshall, *A Longitudinal Study.*

8. For a focused look at this first-year curriculum see John D. Marshall and Phillip C. Moyer, "Building Strong Foundations for Teacher-leaders: The Brackenridge Internship in Teaching Project's First-year Curriculum," *Teaching Education* (in press).

9. For a recent review of current programs and research pertaining to teacher induction see the *Journal of Teacher Education* 37 (1986).

10. See, for example, Ralph W. Tyler, "What We've Learned From Past Studies of Teacher Education," *Phi Delta Kappan* 66 (1985), 682-684; and Donald R. Cruikshank, *Models for the Preparation of America's Teachers* (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa, 1984).

11. Evaluation is defined by Doll as "a broad and continuous effort to inquire into the effects of utilizing educational content and process according to clearly defined goals. In terms of this definition, evaluation may be expected to go beyond simple measurement and also beyond simple application of the evaluator's values and beliefs." Ronald. C. Doll, *Curriculum Improvement: Decision Making and Process,* 6th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1986),218-219.

12. Daniel and Laurel N. Tanner, *Curriculum Development*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 687-745.

13. Michael Scriven, "The Methodology of Evaluation," *AERA Monograph Series on Curriculum Evaluation: Perspectives of Curriculum Evaluation, no. 1* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967).

14. For a comprehensive description of the evaluation design employed by the research team see James T. Sears, John D. Marshall, Amy Otis-Wilborn and Phillip C. Moyer, "Conducting Qualitative Research in Higher Education" (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 272 107).

15. Dan C. Lortie, *Schoolteacher* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 237.

16. For a complete report on the program's second year, see John D. Marshall, James T. Sears, & Amy Otis-Wilborn, *A Longitudinal Study of a Demonstration Project Related to the Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Highly Qualified Persons for the Teaching Profession : The Brackenridge Interns -- The Second Year.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service, in process).